

Higid L'kha

הָגִיד לְךָ אָדָם מַה-טוֹב
וּמָה יְהִי דַּוְרֵשׁ מִמֶּךָּ
כִּי אֲם-עֲשָׂוֹת מִשְׁפָט וְאַהֲבָת חֶסֶד
וְהַצְנֵעַ לְכָת עִם-אֱלֹהִיךָ:

Hi-gid l'kha a-dam ma-tov,
u-ma a-do-nai do-reish mim-kha:
ki im a-sot mish-pat v'a-ha-vat khe-sed
v'hatz-meit le-khet im-e-lo-he-kha.

One has told you, human, what is good,
what Adonai requires of you:
only to do justice and love kindness,
and to go modestly with your God.

D'rash

One has told you, human, what is good—The Creator, Who determines the workings of the world, has made right and wrong clear to us; not what is good in principle or in the abstract, but what is good for us to do. **What Adonai requires of you**—We regard the mitzvot as obligatory not because we must observe them, but because only through them can we be fulfilled. **Only to do justice and love kindness, and to go modestly with your God**—Kindness is the hallmark of relationships that conquer existential loneliness and, through which, we find meaning and fulfillment. Kindness is made possible by justice and modesty, that is, humility. There is no kindness in a relationship in which either person is an “it,” an object for the other’s gratification rather than a “thou,” another sentient human being—which fundamentally is an issue of justice. And there is no kindness in a relationship in which either person is closed to learning from the other—which fundamentally is an issue of humility. More than anything, goodness relies on kindness, and nothing makes it more possible than justice and humility.

Iyun Tefilla

MERCY DOES NOT FALL LIKE GENTLE RAIN

In fact
It doesn't fall
At all
Out of the sky,
But is delivered
By the hands
Of justice,
Our hands.
We are the hands
Of both.
To think otherwise
Is to act as if
We could ignore
The child about to step
Into heavy traffic

For the sake of
Not speaking harshly.
What kind of love is that?
To think otherwise
Is to tear God's name
In two.

* Micah 6:8.

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